



Monthly Review

published by the International Reference Center for the
Rights of Children Deprived of their Family-ISS

N°226
NOVEMBER 2018

EDITORIAL

2017 statistics: From figures to action

In 2018, the ISS/IRC carried out its annual compilation of statistics relating to the number of intercountry adoptions undertaken during the previous year; but what do these figures imply in terms of actions for protection and cooperation?

The compilation of statistics by Central Authorities, as required by Article 7 of the 1993 Hague Convention, is essential in order to identify, understand and address the needs of children in adoption, as well as the needs of those children separated, or at risk of being separated, from their families. It is also very important to adapt any intervention to the children and to the prospective adoptive parents, as well as the procedure in general, whilst assessing the impact of the 1993 Hague Convention. Thus, it is interesting to focus on the actions undertaken by receiving countries as well as by countries of origin in response to some of the statistical trends. However, the statistics are not exhaustive and do not always include adoptions by expatriates or *kafalah* placements as practised in Muslim countries (see Monthly Review No. 210 of March 2017 and Monthly Review No. 213 of July 2017).

With the ongoing decrease in intercountry adoptions, what actions are required?

It is common knowledge that the total number of intercountry adoptions in the top 12 receiving countries is continuously decreasing, and the total number for 2017 amounts to 8,998 in comparison with 10,752 in 2016. All receiving countries, except Belgium and Norway, are affected by this decrease. As for the countries of origin, China remains the top country, followed by Colombia and India, now in second and third positions, and then by South Korea, Haiti, Ukraine and Bulgaria. These increases are a cause for concern, particularly in the case of Colombia, which has renewed – for another two years – its suspension on the adoption of children under the age of six years and 11 months, and where some adoptions remain under no control of the Central Authority. Moreover, do poverty and the lack of support to families result in the separation of families in these countries, when this is contrary to all international standards, such as the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children? A further concern is the over-representation of children of Roma origin in the child protection systems of many countries in Eastern Europe, for whom no domestic solution is found. Further increases can be found in Ethiopia, Haiti and Vietnam, whose protection systems need to be strengthened on key aspects, such as the children's files, donations and the treatment of some children with specific needs. The ISS/IRC is happy to meet the requests for support from these countries through assessment missions and training.

In view of the above, it is interesting to explore how some receiving countries have adjusted their regulations in relation to adoption applications (see Belgium's French Community¹ or Spain in Monthly Review No.194 of September 2015), or how they have adapted the preparation and support offered to applicants (see p. 7). Furthermore, together with the decrease in intercountry adoptions in some receiving countries, domestic adoptions have increased in Australia (13% compared with 2015-2016), where a major effort has been made for children to be adopted in foster families. In the USA², domestic adoptions have continued to increase since 2013 (50,835 in 2013 compared with 59,430 in 2017). It is encouraging to see that the decrease in intercountry adoption has led some countries to review their priorities, including removing obstacles to the domestic adoption of their own children. As for countries of origin, the ISS/IRC also welcomes the efforts undertaken by many, for example Cambodia and Rwanda, as both of them are reinforcing their alternative care systems by implementing reintegration programmes and support for foster families.

Receiving countries	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
United States of America ⁶	9 319	8 668	7 094	6441	5648	5372	4714
Italy	4 022	3 106	2 825	2206	2216	1872	1439
France	1 995	1 569	1 343	1 069	815	953	685
Canada ⁷	1 785	1 367	1 242	905	895	790	621
Spain	2 560	1 669	1 188	824	799	567	531
Sweden ⁸	538	466	341	345	336	257	240
Netherlands	528	488	401	354	304	214	210
Belgium ⁹	360	265	219	144	136	121	133
Norway	297	231	154	142	132	126	127
Germany ¹⁰	934 (579)	801 (420)	661 (272)	209	308	213	81
Denmark	338	219	176	124	97	84	79
Switzerland ¹¹	367	314	280	226	197	101	69
Australia ¹²	215	149	129	114	83	82	69
Total	23 258	19 312	16 053	13 103	11 966	10 752	8 998

What actions are required for children with special needs?

The proportion of older children, groups of siblings, children suffering from diseases, disabilities or severe trauma is high. In France, in 2017, 38% of all children adopted abroad were over the age of five years, and 64.4% had special needs. It is important to point out that no adoption project is considered for a large number of children in the child protection system whose profiles are similar³. In Switzerland, of the 69 children adopted abroad, 34 were aged between five and 14 years; in Belgium, adopted children over the age of five represented 38.6% of all adoptions (compared with 17.4% in 2014-2015 and 10.9% in 2013). In the USA, 98% of the children adopted from China had special needs.

In view of the above, the individual needs of children with these characteristics are now addressed more comprehensively during the assessments of prospective adoptive parents (see Monthly Review No. 210, March 2017) and during their preparation. Instead of receiving only theoretical training, the prospective adoptive parents are placed in practical situations, and this has a greater impact on their decision-making and on the practical consequences of their project (see p. 7). Countries of origin have also developed strategies to improve the preparation process, in particular in relation to the age of children, as in Chile or the Philippines (see Monthly Review No. 199, February 2016 and Monthly Review No. 172, May 2013).

What actions are required in view of the constant increase in post-adoption needs?

Receiving countries and countries of origin are paying more attention to these services, which provide support for the important variety and the increasing number of issues arising in post-adoption, in particular the search for origins (see p. 9). An increase in the number of requests in this field has been registered in Australia (2,755 requests for information during 2016-2017⁴), in the French Community of Belgium (47 requests between June 2017 and May 2018) and in Quebec (50 requests in 2017 compared with 21 in 2015). Adoption breakdowns in countries where they are registered have also increased. In France, 12 cases of

difficult situations or adoption breakdowns were reported to the Central Authority, three of which occurred at the time of the meeting with the child in the country of origin. Moreover, the *Observatoire national de la protection de l'enfance* (ONPE) takes into account the 'children admitted as "pupilles de l'Etat" (state wards) following an adoption breakdown': five in 2012, six in 2013, seven in 2014, nine in 2015 and 10 in 2016. The USA have also registered nine adoption breakdowns, four of which were for behavioural reasons, two due to the child's refusal and one due to a failure in bonding. The USA focused on the importance of post-adoption reports. In order to strengthen this post-adoption support, some countries, such as Belgium, grant subsidies to bodies in charge of providing support (see p. 7)⁵, or expand their teams, as in Quebec.

Countries of origin	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1. China	4 098	3 998	3 316	2734	2817	2475	2189
2. Columbia	1 522	901	562	355	359	314	542
3. India	688	362	298	242	233	323	518
4. Ethiopia	3 144	2 648	1 933	975	543	235	466
5. Haiti	142	262	460	551	236	324	398
6. South Korea	920	797	206	494	406	362	396
7. Vietnam	620	216	293	285	287	248	356
8. Russia	3 017	2 442	1 703	381	210	151	319
9. Philippines	472	374	525	405	354	313	304
10. Bulgaria	259	350	421	323	262	324	289
11. Ukraine	1 054	713	674	560	339	339	270
12. Hungary	154	145	104	77	84	88	233
13. Thailand	5.258	251	272	207	172	250	218
14. Nigeria	218	238	225	175	163	139	206
15. Poland	304	236	332	106	107	148	191
16. Taiwan	311	291	188	147	172	150	157
17. South Africa	120	81	147	176	172	103	130
18. Brazil	359	337	246	31	32	29	127
19. USA	97	178	167	155	160	147	89
20. Latvia	116	59	131	96	189	89	84
21. Uganda	219	246	289	203	208	191	60
22. DRC	339	499	580	240	229	627	54
23. Liberia							22
24. Ghana	107	172	188	128	93	32	22
25. Central African Republic ¹³	19	43	73	44	15	7	14

Analysing these numbers and identifying the measures, which receiving countries and countries of origin need to implement, is not an easy task. The ISS/IRC is pleased to continue helping countries in the development of strategies, which are more respectful of children's needs, and will continue to do so during the next compilation of statistics. See you next year!

The ISS/IRC team,
November 2018

References:

¹ Direction de l'Adoption, Autorité centrale communautaire, Annual Report 2016-17. Available in French at: http://www.adoptions.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&hash=ae77cc3c64f5e7f9f10cd33fa3e7a30999438eb8&file=fileadmin/sites/saac/upload/saac_super_editor/saac_editor/documents/Rapports_d_activites/Rapport_d_activites_2016-2017.pdf.

² AFCARS, Report of 10 August 2018, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport25.pdf>.

³ *Synthèse du rapport de l'ONPE sur la situation des pupilles de l'Etat au 31 décembre 2016*, https://www.onpe.gouv.fr/system/files/publication/synthese_enquete_pupilles_31dec2016_2018.pdf.

⁴ Adoptions Australia, Report 2016-2017, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/adoptions/adoptions-australia-2016-17/contents/table-of-content>.

⁵ *Supra* 1.

⁶ Fiscal year: 1 October 2016 - 30 September 2017.

⁷ For 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2017 the statistical data was provided by the Canadian Central authority; for 2013 and 2014, data came from statistics provided by the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

⁸ For 2016, data refers to statistics provided by the Hague Conference on Private International Law. For 2017, statistical data was provided by the Swedish Central Adoption Authority (MIA).

⁹ For 2016, the numbers come from the the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Central adoption authorities, which refer to adoptions of children physically cared for by their adoptive families, while the final adoption order is sometimes formally

pronounced months or even years later. For 2017, statistics were provided by the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

¹⁰ For 2014, data published by the Hague Conference on Private International Law was referred to. In 2015 and 2016, reference is made to the website of the National Statistical Office 'Statistisches Bundesamt', whose numbers exclude relative adoptions (see <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Soziales/KinderJugendhilfe/ErzieherischeHilfe.html>). For 2017, statistics were provided by the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

¹¹ Numbers for 2015, 2016 and 2017 come from the Federal Statistical Office. 2016 and 2017 data do not include relative adoptions, nor adoptions of adults. From 2011 to 2013, the numbers were provided by the Swiss Central authority, whilst those relating to 2014 were statistics published by the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

¹² Fiscal year: 1 October 2016 – 30 September 2017 (see <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129553828>).

¹³ According to ISS/IRC sources, children from the Central African Republic were only adopted by French, American and Canadian citizens.

Several countries, such as Germany, Australia and Norway, cluster several countries under general categories, such as 'several Asian countries' or 'other countries'; thus, it is impossible to determine with accuracy the specific countries of origin of these adopted children.

